

June 25, 1956

Dr. Wolfram Heumann
Bot. Inst., Tech. Hochschule,
Braunschweig, Germany

Dear Dr. Heumann:

I was pleased to receive your letter of June 14, insofar as it concerned your successful visit with the Drs. Ørskov. I regret not having replied even sooner, but I was away at a scientific meeting in Baltimore.

I am sorry to learn of your possible difficulties with your fellowship application, and can only hope it will be eventually successful. I, of course, know nothing of how such things are handled in Germany, but would make this comment from my own experience here. As a rule, it is wrong to conclude that delay or refusal of a fellowship application needs to carry any imputation as to your own abilities. The committees which study such applications never have enough information on which to base a judgment, and in deciding among candidates of approximately equal merit (as it may seem to them) they may rely on entirely trivial criteria. For example, I have sat on committees which voted to refuse a grant on the ground that the applicant submitted too many ideas, and they would not trust him to concentrate his energies on the one which was most promising. Things may be done differently in Europe, but the only constructive reaction here is to press your application, and apply again if by chance you are refused once.

I do not know whether it is a wise decision or not, but on your advice I have written again to the D. F-G., as you requested. I have no hesitation in sending you a copy of my remarks, which, I hope will be used to good effect by the examining committee; I could not say more than this, and possibly my inability to offer a personal testimony would weaken its good effect.

As to the possibility of alternative financial support here, I regret that our funds for next year are entirely committed so that it would be impossible to offer you a position. If it is at all possible, I suggest that you renew your efforts to obtain this fellowship, and if not from the D. F-G. then perhaps from other agencies (is there a Fulbright or a Smith-Mundt program in Germany?) Alternatively, you might make some connection with your German colleagues on the field of microbial genetics-- e.g., Walter Harm at Berlin-Dahlem, Marquardt at Freiburg, or R. Kaplan at Frankfurt. These men have connections in the U.S. also, and a favorable reference based on their intimate knowledge of your abilities would be very useful.

At any rate, I hope your plans prosper, and that you will keep me informed of developments.

Yours sincerely,

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